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13 SEP 1972

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
VIA : Acting Deputy Director for Plans
SUBJECT : Chile: Likelihood and Possible
Consequences of a Military Coup

1. This memorandum forwards information for the DCI.

2. On 30 August 1972 in a memorandum entitled "The Deteriorating Situation in Chile," WH Division indicated that the political temperature in Chile was rising but judged that no military coup was imminent. Since making that appraisal a number of overt events [REDACTED] have led us to revise our previous opinion. We now believe that a military attempt to overthrow the Allende government in the immediate future is far more likely than it was on 30 August. The following factors have heavily influenced this judgment.

a. [REDACTED] confirmed that Commander in Chief of the Army General Carlos Prats has recently had several clashes with President Allende over the extradition of Argentine terrorists and the declaration of a state of emergency in Santiago on 21 August. On 11 September [REDACTED]

b. [REDACTED]

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c. Street demonstrations by the right and the left continue. Although the opposition political parties remain generally opposed to a military coup attempt at this time, some opposition groups, including private sector organizations, are seeking to escalate political tensions in order to encourage military intervention.

3. The most important of the apparent coup indicators as outlined in paragraph 2 is [REDACTED]

4. There are, however, several factors which tend to indicate that a coup is still not a certainty. These are:

a. [REDACTED]

b. Public opinion inside Chile does not appear to favor a military move at this time. Opposition political parties apparently are not involved in any coup planning and are believed to feel that military action, if taken, should follow the March 1973 Congressional elections, which they feel will demonstrate that the present government does not represent the mass of the Chilean electorate.

c. Notwithstanding the present crisis, the Chilean people, including the military, are prone to avoid difficult and unconstitutional solutions to their problems and have an outstanding propensity for sticking to the constitutional path, however rocky.

[REDACTED]

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d. Although we are monitoring all developments in Chile very carefully, [REDACTED]

5. The following are the principal options now open to the U.S. Government:

a. We can continue our present hands-off, monitoring stance.

b. We can pass the word to key military leaders, [REDACTED] that we do not consider the time propitious for a coup and that we would be reluctant to provide support to a military government in the likely event that a coup attempt is followed by a bloody civil war.

c. We can provide encouragement to the military, either directly or indirectly [REDACTED]

6. Of the three options, the first appears to be the most appropriate at this particular moment. We must, however, be prepared for a coup and should attempt to formulate our response if military intervention should occur. In this connection the following factors need attention: Will the U.S. recognize a military government immediately? Is the U.S. prepared to provide the massive economic support which will be required to ease the country's most immediate economic problems? Will we support the military in case of a civil war?

7. While the temptation to assume a positive role in support of the military is great, the following considerations indicate a need for caution:

a. We do not believe that public opinion, inside Chile or abroad, is yet prepared to accept a military takeover. Popular sentiment is definitely [REDACTED]

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swinging against Allende, both inside Chile and abroad. Thus the Marxist experiment should probably be allowed to run its natural course at least through the March 1973 elections, so that Chileans and others will be convinced that the Allende government was given a fair chance and that his brand of socialism is not the road to true social progress.

b. Although the U.S. (and specifically the CIA) will undoubtedly be accused of engineering the collapse of the Allende government, if and when that occurs, these accusations will be exceptionally strident if a military coup takes place without a dramatic and legitimate pretext (such as a flagrant violation of the constitution) and without massive popular support. Even if a military coup is successful, it will provide fodder for leftist anti-U.S. and anti-administration propaganda which could be exploited effectively in this country as well as abroad.

c. An attempted military coup might fail, thus providing the government with an adequate pretext for cancelling the March 1973 elections and destroying the democratic opposition. An unsuccessful coup would also probably eliminate the military as a barrier to radicalization and consolidation of Allende's revolution. A partially successful coup might plunge the country into a bloody civil war, with unpredictable consequences.

8. The Station has been directed to exercise extreme care in all its dealings with Chileans, particularly the military; to carefully monitor all events, but under no circumstances to attempt to influence them.


Chief
Western Hemisphere Division

cc: DDCI

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Chile: Likelihood and Possible
Consequences of a Military Coup

FROM:

C/WHD

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

13 SEP 1972

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and
building)

DATE

OFFICER'S
INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom
to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

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ADDP

13
Sept

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DCT

14 SEP 1972

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5

DCT

9/15

3.5.5

I favor 5. a.

This situation
is too murky
for me to want
to advocate any
specific plan
of action.

Whitelyby aye

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